

**EXPELLING AMERICA: A NEW COORDINATED  
RADICAL STRATEGY**

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**An Overview**

**By**

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### Origins of the Radical Coalition

Ever since the early 1980s, a core radical group of countries, comprising Libya, Syria, Iran, North Korea and Cuba, has attempted to coordinate a wide-ranging strategy designed to expel the United States military, political and economic presence from key world areas.\*

Five developments, in the late 1970s, helped crystallize the radical countries into a purposeful coalition:

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\* It should be made unequivocally clear at the outset, that when the term "coordinated" is used to describe the radical strategy, two meanings are intended:

1. In specific instances, the radical countries have attempted to operationally coordinate moves designed to harm US interests abroad. Certain direct attacks on US personnel and facilities overseas (e.g. the October 1983 bombing of the Marines' Headquarters in Beirut) have been the result of such collaboration. The same holds true with regard to radical activity designed to stretch US forces thin.

2. More importantly, it is not suggested that radical leaders conduct a "conference call" prior to every anti-US operation. Rather, it is imperative that we understand these countries present unison via a shared ideology, a Weltanschauung, which identifies America as their common enemy and prescribes principles of response. The consensus among the core radicals that they are "brothers-in-arms standing in the same trench in the struggle against imperialism," creates a pronounced and widely shared willingness to support each other by independently embarking on measures inimical to US interests. Moreover, the common objective of expelling America dictates in the minds of the core leadership a base need for joint action as the power imbalance between the contestants is enormous.

- The initiation of the Camp David peace process by Egypt's President Sadat in November 1977, which led to the formation of the Arab Steadfastness Front.
- The fall of the Shah of Iran and the installation in power of the Ayatollah Khomeini's regime in early 1979.
- The July 1979 seizure of power by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, which had a profound impact on the policies of Cuba.
- The establishment of a US Rapid Deployment Force which the core radical countries perceived as a direct military threat.
- The election of President Reagan in early 1980. The election was clearly perceived by radical leaderships as signalling America's determination to regain its lost stature and position most likely by "settling the account" with the radical countries.

#### Elements of the Radical Expulsion Strategy

The radical effort to expel America contains three elements:

Element 1: Dislodging the US of External Strategic Assets

The first operational element of the strategy involves radical collaboration in efforts to destroy the US political/military infrastructure overseas. The aim is threefold: First, to eliminate the rationale for US military and political presence abroad by decoupling America's allies from Washington. Second, to impede America military deployments in key world areas by undermining their external base structure. Third, to intensify foreign condemnation of US overseas presence and involvement.

The prime method employed by the radical coalition to achieve these objectives involves the launching of a concerted and intensive subversive campaign against Third World regimes friendly to the US. As Figure 1 demonstrates, three kinds of inter-related subversions are noticeable in the target areas: ideological, political and economic. Manifestations of the three subversive techniques are frequently visible in areas stretching from the Phillipines to Western Africa as well as in Central America. While it is impossible to detail in the limited space available the evidence supporting this contention several examples will testify to its prevalence.

-- Sri Lanka, where the US is planning to build a powerful VOA transmitter, has been the subject of an intensified campaign to destabilize the government there. The Colombo daily Sunday Times, on 22 April 1984, reported, for example, "a dramatic North Korean link in the Tamil separatist campaign while diplomatic sources said the Pyongyang might be trying to destabilize the Sri Lankan Government because of its pro-Western stance." Accordingly, Tamil separatist radio broadcasts

picked up in Colombo and in southern India were said to have been beamed from a North Korean ship anchored in the narrow straits between India and Sri Lanka.

"The weekend broadcasts--in English, Sinhala and Tamil--calling for a separate Tamil state in the North and east of Sri Lanka and advocating terrorism, are said to be beamed by a powerful transmitter which is shifted around to avoid jamming...The ship was anchored outside the new surveillance zone set up (in early April) by the National Security Ministry between Sri Lanka's coast and the maritime boundary with India and safely out of reach of the navy and air force."

In May 1984, Sri Lanka's Minister of Transport, M. H. Mohamed conducted a 5-day visit to Libya to "inquire about allegations" that Tripoli has been supporting the Tamil insurgency. Mohamed told newsmen in Madras, India that Libyan foreign minister Ali Abd as-Salam at-Turayki had "dismissed" charges about his country's connection with the Tamil separatists. It may be recalled in this connection that during its 1982 "Peace for Galilee" operation, Israeli forces captured dozens of Tamil "Tigers" who had been training in PLO bases in Lebanon. More were reportedly undergoing training in PLO camps in South Yemen. More importantly from a longer term perspective, is the establishment by Libya of various Islamic institutions inside Sri Lanka ostensibly to attend to the needs of its Muslim minority numbering more than a million people (7% of the

population). This process would likely result in the further radicalization of the Sri Lankan society.

-- Jordan: There is no question but that the Hashemite Kingdom is under increasing radical pressure. While part of this is due to King Hussein's strong and continuous support for Iraq in its ongoing war with Iran, the recent intensification of this campaign could also be traced to US plans to assign the Jordanian Army the mission of a "regional rapid deployment force." Further, the recent decision to normalize relations with Egypt, would likely be a costly one for Hussein.

An interesting and unusual description of the concerted radical effort to undermine the Jordanian monarchy was recently given by its Prime Minister Ahmad Ubaydat. Speaking in the House of Representatives on 15 May 1984, Ubaydat described in detail radical efforts at ideological subversion aimed at Jordanian students both inside the country as well as those studying abroad. He noted:

"I do not want to discuss this subject too much, but I assure you that hardly a week passes without the authorities impounding explosives or weapons transferred to this country to be used in this country. These explosives and weapons are not intended to be used in the occupied territories. We are not ashamed to say this...The onslaught is fierce. There are party and political organizations, some of them from the resistance factions and others. Some of them have relations with the host country, some of them have relations with Libya, and some of them have relations with Iran. Even the (Syrian-backed) Fatah dissidents who rebelled against their leadership have a role. They seceded from their leadership and they are now working against Jordan. They sent fresh quantities of weapons to Jordan. Explosives and bombs were seized. There is also the Al-Jihad Organization which is active in Egypt...(This

organization) even contacted Iran with the aim of coordinating actions. Weapons were seized. It was revealed that they received training in Lebanon and in other places. There was also another religious organization owing allegiance to Iran, under the patronage of the Iranian Embassy in Jordan. Jordanian citizens were involved. They exploited the Mosques to begin their campaign. They did not name their organization in order to avoid being pursued. Those responsible for this organization visited Iran twice, contacted the Iranian charge d'affaires in Amman, and contacted other sides. This is going on continuously.

#### Element 2: Stretching US Forces Thin

As an integral part of the coordinated radical effort to expel America from key world regions, some countries, particularly Libya and the DPRK, have sought to stretch US military power thin, by fomenting tensions in certain areas of the world as well as by launching strategic diversions. It would seem that in pursuing this strategy, the radicals sought to:

- Spread US military resources between widely separate geographical areas, thus reducing the potential effectiveness of the deployments.
- Increase the financial cost for the US of maintaining expeditionary forces abroad.
- Demonstrate the vulnerability and political fragility of Third World regimes friendly to the United States by highlighting their frequent need for US military backing. In turn, this is regarded

by the radicals as abetting popular discontent inside the target countries and as contributing to an increased reluctance on the part of Third World states to offer America their friendship and military facilities.

-- Create for the benefit of international and domestic audiences alike the impression that the United States is under attack around the world. Also, that Washington has been relentlessly pursuing an "aggressive and interventionist imperial policy" which is not only immoral but in fact very dangerous.

As Table 1 below demonstrates, radical leaders have apparently recognized, and sought to exploit, the emerging correlation between incessant and costly committals of American forces abroad, and the improved prospects for a wholesale withdrawal of US foreign political/military presence which such trials yield eventually. Consequently, Libya and the DPRK have engaged in a long term strategy designed to undermine the United States' overseas posture by repeatedly putting it under strain. Expulsion of American military presence, expected as a consequence, is undoubtedly regarded in both Tripoli and Pyongyang as the best guarantee for long term survival of the Libyan and North Korean regimes. Moreover, the removal of US power from key world regions is likely to open up new opportunities for radical countries to export revolution, uproot opposing regimes and destabilize local allies of the US.



It should be stressed that while the diversionary efforts cited in Table 1 might be dismissed as insignificant militarily, several considerations need to be taken into account:

-- The Soviet Union, either through pre-planning or by seizing an opportunity, could time a major strategic move to coincide with other radical pressures so as to scatter US military resources between several fronts. Alternatively, radical countries' willingness to independently launch anti-US operations (e.g. mining of key waterways) to support a Soviet military initiative should not be doubted.

-- The size of the diversionary effort depends entirely on its perpetrators. The DPRK, and to a lesser extent Libya, possess capabilities which in principle allow them greater impact on US strategic posture overseas via intensified military pressure on key US allies if they so desire.

-- Following each of the diversionary interactions detailed in Table 1, the central DPRK-Libyan activity was followed up by "secondary" interactions with Syria.

-- The United States, by being unaware of true radical motivations, has actually rewarded negative behavior. It is critically important to appreciate that Qaddafi and other radical

leaders have been masters of deception. The Libyan leader has thus not only deceived the US, but utilized Washington's countermeasures themselves to further his subversion of US allies. He says:

"What a shame. Following each fabricated incident, rescue calls are made to the United States to send US spy planes. What a farce. Rescue calls were made for US AWACS aircraft 4 times in one year, as if Egypt and Sudan--which represent half the Arab nation's population--cannot defend themselves, cannot feel assured, and cannot preserve their security except with US aircraft. This is a shame for the Egyptian and Sudanese armies. This is a shame for the Egyptian and Sudanese people. Following each fabricated incident, rescue calls are immediately made to the United States, as if Egypt has no air defense system, or an air force. Egypt has said it will protect Sudan. Egypt has pledged to protect Sudan. If Egypt can protect Sudan, then why can it not protect itself, having to seek help of US spy aircraft 4 times in one year...He who has nothing cannot give."

Ironically, through its inept response, the US has thus assisted the long-standing radical quest to destabilize Egypt and the Sudan.

-- It would appear that in addition to specific diversionary operations, usually launched to deflect growing US military presence in the vicinity of one of the two countries (DPRK and Libya), radical strategy has sought to involve America permanently in trouble spots close to its own shores. While some observers may argue that radical support of Nicaragua has been thus motivated by cynical self-serving interests, this is hardly the view of the core radical leaders. In fact they have frequently served notice that their own challenges to the US have to taken pressures off the

"progressive forces" elsewhere, for example, in Central America.

The radical effort is thus total and interrelated while the claim of self interest is based in partial interpretations inappropriate to the understanding of a comprehensive concept envisioning a unified approach to the problem of "imperialist aggression."

### Element 3: Direct Targeting of US Presence and Interests

As noted on several occasions, raids on US targets overseas were unquestionably the result of operational collaboration between two or more core radical members. Other hits were carried out independently. Such state-sponsored terrorist strikes at American personnel and installations overseas are designed to force the US to withdraw its presence from key outposts as being too costly. The attacks are also intended to demonstrate Washington's inability to defend its own interests and instruments of foreign presence, let alone its allies. From this particular perspective, radical attacks on defended US facilities are perhaps of greater payoff than striking at isolated, vulnerable targets. Again, the particular traits of the radical thinking have to be recognized in order to devise appropriate countermeasures: It may be that defense actually provokes attacks rather than deters them.

Besides, forcing the US to boost the defenses of American institutions abroad, entails other important benefits as well. For example, in the wake of the December 1983 bombing of the US Embassy in Kuwait, as well as other official French and Kuwaiti institutions, the New York Times, on 13 December 1983, observed as follows:

"The attackers surely must have known that such bombings will force the Americans and the French to hide behind the prison-camp-style barriers which presently protect the American and French Embassies in Beirut. But the more isolated these foreign diplomatic missions become and the more repressive the security measures the host countries take, the more fertile the ground for spreading revolutionary ideas. In this sense Beirut is a prime example, where with each passing day of misery more and more posters of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini seem to appear on walls around town."

The United States could thus find itself confronting a dangerous and complicated vicious cycle: While neglecting the defenses of its overseas institution has brought strong condemnation at home, externally hardening such installations could prove provocative, and would seem to involve significant political costs.

Of particular concern are recent efforts by core members to equip themselves with weaponry potentially useful in attacking US targets. Moreover, in this quest the radical countries have been aided not only by the Soviet Union, but by the greed of certain West European states. Such has been the case with French supply of Exocet SSMs as well as Italian fast missile patrol boats to Libya. For their part, the Soviets are known to have provided Syria with ground-to-sea missiles capable of hitting US Sixth Fleet ships if another American-Syrian confrontation develops. The provision of SS-12 Scaleboard missiles to Libya is another disturbing development, raising suspicions about Moscow's motivations vis-a-vis the core radical coalition.

### Sources of Hostility Towards the US

It has to be made abundantly clear that despite their participation in the radical coalition, individual motivations for seeking "memberships" cannot be overlooked. In the longer run, some of the countries may even become rivals--most notably in the case of future Syrian-Iranian relations. However, these countries are presently united by a potent and lasting bond--deep-seated enmity toward, and profound anxiety over, Washington's intentions.

The enmity of the five core radicals towards the United States grows out of the following:

1. The US is perceived as a strong ideological threat. Two observations need to be made to appreciate the significance of this reality:

- It should be noted that save for Syria's Asad, all other leaders of the core countries have come to power on the basis of universal ideologies designed to substitute for Capitalism, for example, Qaddafi's Third Universal Theory and Khomeini's Fundamentalistic Islam.

- The radicals see the ideological threat as American. For example:

"Who learns Russian, listens to Radio Moscow, watches Soviet films, buys Czech watches, or invests in the Ukraine? It is the United States and Western Europe, rather, that influence Muslims everywhere. Their pop music, movies, video games, comics, textbooks, literature, and art reach throughout the Muslim world. Their clothing, foods, household items, and machines are found in towns and villages. Their universities and banks and oil companies beckon aspiring Muslims. Their sexual customs--contraception, abortion, dancing, dating, nightclubs, pornography, mixed social drinking, tight clothing, scant swimming suits, mixed bathing, beauty pageants, co-educations and female employment--break down the divisions required by Islamic law...Fundamentalists view the culture of the United States and West Europe as the main threat because its influence so greatly exceeds that of the Soviet bloc."\*

2. America is perceived as a potential direct military threat.

3. Since all of these countries hold irredentist claims against neighboring states, or have been actively engaged in exporting revolution, they perceive Washington's pro-status quo stance as an obstacle to their territorial and political ambitions. Though radical leaderships do not agree in the precise details of the future international system, they are unanimous in their view of its present ills and the absolute need for its radical restructuring.

4. Syria, Libya and Iran have attempted to harm American interests because of Washington's strong support for Israel. The

\* Daniel Pipes "Fundamentalist Muslims and US Policy," International Briefing, the Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C. 10 August 1984, pp.7-8.

latter is perceived as a powerful regional check against these countries' aspirations, possibly acting in cohort with Washington.

### Novel Aspects of the Radical Strategy

Four aspects make the radical strategy a serious threat to US security interests:

-- Coordination: While the core countries--with the exception of Iran under the Shah--have had a long record of supporting radical causes (e.g. terrorism), the novel aspect is the often lucid demonstration of the concerted nature of the expulsion effort, including a proven and growing interest in collaborating in harming specific US interests and instruments of foreign presence, since the early 1980s.

-- Motivation: It has been customary among Western observers to assume that underlying these countries' radical motivation are: First, the need for hard currency--this particularly in the case of North Korea's military and other support for such radicals as Iran and Libya. Second, the search for political clout or legitimization--allegedly the belief among the leaders of these countries that revolutionary zeal and pronounced extremism are conducive to cementing their domestic position and claim for the leadership of the world's "liberation forces." In contrast, the

current perspective suggests that the main motivation behind a large share of radical-sponsored activities is strategic and ideological. In turn, this guarantees that the participants would be less prone to compromise and more likely to "go all the way" against their implacable enemy--the United States.

-- Range of anti-US activities: In recent years the study of radicalism has become synonymous with that of terrorism. By being too narrowly focused, Western analysts have thus contributed to a dangerous fallacy neglecting in the process an entire range of radical (non-terrorist) activities similarly designed to harm American overseas interests. For some unexplained reason, Western observers have treated ideological subversion of US allies, or the massing of conventional armies on their borders, as a separate, perhaps less ominous, phenomenon unrelated to an overall radical strategy even when carried out by the very countries which, at other times, were denounced for the sponsorship of terrorism.

-- Target: The prime target of the radical expulsion strategy is the US presence and security interests abroad. This holds true even when such activities do not physically harm the instruments of America's foreign presence themselves. For instance, the wide-spread radical subversive efforts noticeable in Third World countries friendly to the United States are mainly aimed at undermining America's overseas posture by dislodging the US of its external strategic assets.



### The Role of the Soviet Union

Moscow does not appear to control the radical expulsion strategy. By all accounts, the five core radical countries are sufficiently motivated to pursue their anti-US activities independently. However, in order to reap the benefits of this radical campaign, no Soviet control is necessary. In fact, the Soviets cannot be described as passive. On the contrary, ample evidence exists to suggest strong Soviet support of the radical coalition. In general, the Soviets seems to be utilizing the various radical pressures to further their penetration of the target areas. Recent examples of this policy course could be found in Soviet arms offers to Kuwait and Lebanon, its conclusion on 9 October 1984 of a friendship treaty with the YAR and its courting of Jordan.

With regard to the core radical countries themselves, the Soviets seem to be engaged in a threefold effort:

1. Consistent and highly visible efforts to radicalize the core countries even further, while attempting to streamline their hostility exclusively against the United States.

2. Supplying the war: The Soviets have attempted to build up the defenses of the five radical countries so that they can effectively protect themselves and support each other if confronted by Washington. The recent supply of anti-ship missiles to Syria is a case in point. Similar activity is apparent with regard to the

supply of sophisticated Soviet mines to Libya (one of which was found recently in the Red Sea), the upgrading of the Cuban arsenal, as well as the expected resumption of aircraft deliveries (reportedly 30-40 MIG-23s) to the DPRK.

Additionally, by augmenting radical arsenals, the Soviets have, in effect, allowed the core countries the extension of their military reach into those regions where Moscow has sought to foment trouble and undermine America's position. A striking example of this evolving capability came in April 1983, when four Libyan cargo planes--3 of which were Soviet-built Il-76s--were intercepted by Brazilian authorities, apparently on their way to Nicaragua. A search of the planes uncovered heavy arms, missiles, Czech rifles, a dismantled Soviet training plane and at least 5 tons of bombs and grenades. Newspaper accounts reported allegations that the arms were, in fact, bound for El Salvador, by way of Nicaragua, to help the Marxist guerrillas fighting the government there.

3. Deterring the US from responding to the source: On numerous occasions Moscow has made it clear that it will not tolerate US military moves designed to respond, and at times retaliate, against the territories of the core radical states. A similar Soviet posture has been noticeable with regard to Khomeini's Iran. Frequently, the Soviets have implied and/or demonstrated their defensive umbrella over that country. For example, the Soviets had warned the United States against attacking

Iran, when in the wake of the failed US rescue mission, reports indicated America was planning to punish Tehran and seize Kharg Island. The Soviets on that occasion also massed troops and conducted exercises on their border with Iran.

It has to be recognized, at the same time, that since the US has seldom entertained serious thoughts of striking at the core countries, Soviet protective image is both effective and "cheaply" acquired. In effect Moscow has been capitalizing on America's confusion and uncertainty regarding what response, if any, should be developed to deal with the proliferation of anti-American radical pressures.

Some Western observers have noted that the USSR may potentially be more concerned over radicalism than the United States is. They cite Soviet geographical proximity, Russia's ethnic composition and the anti-dominationist content of radical ideology as elements which should make Moscow apprehensive. Consequently, it is suggested that the Soviets may be open to some sort of US-Soviet cooperation in checking the radical threat. However, there are serious difficulties standing in the way of such a hypothetical condominium:

-- It is illogical to assume that as the radicals become more effective against American presence and interests, the Soviets would get less interested. Besides their vehement anti-Americanism, what attracts Moscow to the radical countries is the

geographical spread and geopolitical opportunities which the five states potentially provide:

- Syria--is an important outpost on Turkey's southern flank as well as on Jordan's northern borders, and a crucial link to Iran. It may also provide a potential staging area useful in confronting US naval deployments in the Mediterranean.
- Libya--has been an important staging area for Soviet penetration of Africa. In addition, it has provided a pressure point against Egypt and the Sudan, and may play a role in Soviets plans for confronting the US Sixth Fleet.
- Iran--could become a focal point in a Soviet drive towards the Persian Gulf. Over the longer range, Iran may become the linchpin in a Soviet effort to establish a "southern tier" designed to protect its defense perimeter, or in Soviet parlance "southern borders."
- North Korea--has been an important instrument in Soviet policy of exerting pressure on the PRC. It shares Soviet interest in blocking increased US-Japan-ROK strategic ties which apparently are tacitly supported by China.

- Cuba--in addition for being located in America's backyard, the country provides an attractive staging area for further penetration of Central American-Caribbean basin.
- Cooperation with the US in checking radical countries is liable to undermine Moscow's position in the Third World.
- The radical threat could become an important bargaining chip for the Soviets in their relations with the US. In other words, by utilizing their widely-held image of "puppeteers" the Soviets may gain more than by professing Moscow's own concerns. On the other hand, an American approach suggesting that such a superpower cooperation be established, tacitly confirms such a US perception and would likely confer on the Soviets important politico/strategic advantages.

### Conclusion

While some in the West, solely preoccupied with combating terrorist, have been endlessly searching for the "smoking gun," a macro view of the radical expulsion effort produces an entirely different "surprise": repeated, clear-cut and public confirmation by leaders of the core countries of their extreme malintentions towards the United States. This in spite of their fears of retaliation by an enemy which they themselves have described as an "arch-satan," and the secretive nature of some of the techniques they have employed against America's interests and presence overseas.

In light of this reality the impression has emerged that what hinders the US is not the lack of evidence, but rather the absence of a hypothesis which could explain how the various "pieces" fit. Indeed, the contradiction highlighted between Western assumptions recommending secrecy and dissociation, vs. the actual open reaffirmation, at times boastful substantiation, of these countries' deep enmity, seem to have continuously thrown intelligence estimates off balance, causing them to judge radical warnings as non-credible. Up to now, the only beneficiaries of this fallacy have been the leaders of the core radical coalition. In fact, the widely-shared belief that these leaders' conduct is "erratic," or "crazy," has been in total variance with the fact that in their anti-US campaign, they have been completely rational and fanatically attached to their goal of driving America out of their spheres of interest.

Several other intelligence fallacies stem from the preceding analysis:

-- There is dangerously little attention given in the West to the role that ideology plays in guiding some international actors.

-- Radicalism has been consistently and wrongly equated with terrorism.

-- Extremist intentions openly communicated have been normally thought as incredible and often ignored.

-- Assumptions that militant utterances may be indeed cover for willingness to negotiate may be flawed. In fact it could be that willingness to negotiate is nothing but a cover for hostile intentions.

-- The assumption that a military issue acquires its significance only if presented in Soviet terms, disregards the painful lessons of Lebanon.

-- It is impossible to ignore the record of Soviet interactions with the radical countries. Moreover, the assumption that the Soviet radical link has resulted from Moscow's failures in the Third World is not only arguable but more importantly, irrelevant to the problem at hand: the consequences for the United States of such a link.

-- Deception is a game which even small powers may effectively play to their own advantage because of America's continuous pre-occupation with the Soviet threat alone.

-- There is significant, recurring and detectable evidence of regular and highly intensive anti-US politico/strategic interactions between all the core radical countries to warrant viewing them as members of a coalition and their activities as governed by common ideology and strategy.

Figure 1.

**RADICAL ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO DESTROY U.S. POLITICAL-STRATEGIC  
INFRASTRUCTURE ABROAD**

